

# Registered Apprenticeship Stepping Up to the Plate

In President Obama's inaugural address to Congress, he spoke about the role the workforce and education systems and Registered Apprenticeship will play in preparing U.S. workers to succeed in today's global market. The president issued the following challenge to all Americans:

"And so tonight, I ask every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training. This can be community college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship. But whatever the training may be, every American will need to get more than a high school diploma. And dropping out of high school is no longer an option."

In response to the President's challenge, Registered Apprenticeship, administered through the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, offers a great opportunity for young women and men to learn a skill, establish a relationship with a top-notch employer, discover the countless opportunities available to excel in an industry of interest, and begin to build the confidence and work experience needed to begin a successful career.

PHOTO BY STOCKPHOTO.COM



# Apprenticeship: President's Challenge

BY JANE OATES AND JOHN V. LADD

## Real-world Education and Training

So what exactly is Registered Apprenticeship? It's a job and it's education at the same time. An apprentice gets a job with an employer and begins the coursework needed to "master" the skills needed in the occupation. The apprenticeship can last anywhere from one year to four or five years depending on the occupation. As workers go through the apprenticeship, they earn wage increases as they master certain skills.

With more than 225,000 employer partners nationwide, Registered Apprenticeship offers a wide array of career options that meet workers' needs and prepare them for work in an industry that offers long-term employment. Apprentices are able to take advantage of career preparation that includes on-the-job experience and related academic and technical classroom instruction. Because so many of today's jobs require highly skilled workers, many of these apprenticeships also include the opportunity to earn an associate degree in addition to an Apprenticeship Completion Certificate. Registered Apprenticeship offers a flexible training strategy, often with programs designed to allow apprentices to move at their own pace as they learn the skills needed to excel in their chosen field.

---

**"And so tonight, I ask every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training.**

**This can be community college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship. But whatever the training may be, every American will need to get more than a high school diploma. And dropping out of high school is no longer an option."**

---



If a young person, or someone looking to start a new career, wants to become an electrician, a chef, a retail manager, an operating engineer, a home health or child care specialist, a carpenter, a dental assistant, a painter, or a corrections officer, Registered Apprenticeship may have a program that meets their needs. In fact,

there are nearly 1,000 different career opportunities available through 29,000 programs nationwide.

Computer Programmer? There is a Registered Apprenticeship program. Graphic Designer? You guessed it, Registered Apprenticeship has it. Firefighters, seafarers, machinists, jewelers, tool and





PHOTO BY ISTOCK.COM

PHOTO BY ISTOCKPERL.COM

die makers, surgical technologists; all these occupations have apprenticeship programs that can prepare and launch apprentices in their field of choice. They offer an entry-level position with the opportunity to learn, earn and move up a career ladder.

Whatever one's interest, Registered Apprenticeship has a program to match. Almost half a million like-minded adults have taken that first step and are currently enrolled. With hands-on training, and the potential to earn college credit, it's a great option that leads to long-term career opportunities. And, upon completing an apprenticeship program, apprentices earn a nationally recognized industry certification.

Apprentices can also explore emerging industries such as biotechnology and industries related to green technologies, and will be among the first generation of workers driving innovation and creativity in renewable energy, green manufacturing and other environmentally friendly careers. While in Memphis in June of this year, Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis announced that the Employment and Training Administration would issue a total of \$500 million in grants to fund projects that prepare workers for green

jobs in the energy efficiency and renewable energy industries.

"Emerging green jobs are creating opportunities for workers to enter careers that offer good wages and pathways to long-term job growth and prosperity," said Secretary Solis. "Workers receiving training through projects funded by these competitions will be at the forefront as our nation transforms the way we generate electricity, manufacture products and do business across a wide range of industries."

To learn more about these opportunities, please visit: [www.doleta.gov/grants/find\\_grants.cfm](http://www.doleta.gov/grants/find_grants.cfm).

### Preparing Skilled Workers in a Global Economy

As the President's quote stated, attending college, or participating in a structured training program or apprenticeship is no longer a plus, it's a must. And often, a young person doesn't have to choose between college and career training. Today's Registered Apprenticeship works directly with many two- and four-year colleges and universities to provide the technical classroom instruction that employers demand. Many apprentices earn credit toward a college degree and

often employers will help pay the cost of tuition, books and other materials. Also similar to college, Registered Apprenticeship programs are challenging and require commitment. With program sponsors making substantial investments of time and money, it is important that an apprentice is committed and prepared to tackle the rigorous curriculum developed for a given program. This commitment will pay off both financially and professionally as apprentices develop the work habits necessary for success in today's competitive 21st century workplace.

Working with partners in the career and technical education (CTE) system allows Registered Apprenticeship programs to provide young people with increased opportunities, and support the goals of preparing U.S. workers to compete in a global economy and training America's next generation of skilled workers. Beginning in December of 2008, the national Registered Apprenticeship office launched a technical assistance strategy to help advance apprenticeship into the 21st century through increased integration with the workforce and education systems. Through a series of regional Action Clinics, leadership teams from these systems came together to share expertise





PHOTO BY STOCKPOT.COM

PHOTO BY STOCKPOT.COM

**Computer Programmer? There is a Registered Apprenticeship program. Graphic Designer? You guessed it, Registered Apprenticeship has it. Firefighters, seafarers, machinists, jewelers, tool and die makers, surgical technologists; all these occupations have apprenticeship programs that can prepare and launch apprentices in their field of choice.**

and best practice models that highlight the importance of building an integrated system that incorporates Registered Apprenticeship as a critical component of regional, state or local talent development strategies.

These clinics were held in Chicago (December 2008), Dallas (January 2009), and most recently San Francisco (March/April 2009). The clinics resulted in state teams developing and implementing strategic action plans to increase collaboration among the Registered Apprenticeship, workforce development and CTE systems that address the needs of today's workers and develop a pipeline of skilled talent for emerging industries—specifically, health care, advanced manufacturing and green jobs.

There are apprenticeship offices in all 50 states, making it easy to learn about the programs available in any region of the United States. Upon enrollment, an apprentice will receive training and have the advantage of working closely with a mentor, who will guide him or her through each phase of an apprenticeship to gain the necessary skills, safety requirements, and important tricks of the trade. As apprentices' skill level increases, their wages will increase, and they may be

able to earn interim credentials that chart their progress and help advance their career as they work toward completion of a program. All the while, they'll be making good money and developing strong work habits and skills.

Once workers complete an apprenticeship, their pay will rival that of college graduates and even those with advanced degrees. The average salary for a worker who has completed a Registered Apprenticeship program is \$45,000 a year, with some earning as much as \$65,000 and more. With many apprenticeships leading to a two- or four-year degree, that degree, along with the hands-on experience they will obtain will make employers stand up and notice that this person has taken the initiative to meet and exceed the requirements needed to compete for good jobs.

### Opening Doors to High-growth Careers

This is an exciting time in our journey to train America's workforce. Registered Apprenticeship programs have provided opportunities to millions of Americans for more than 70 years. As new industries emerge and our country increases its focus on green technologies, renewable energy and other emerging and existing

high-growth industries, the Registered Apprenticeship and CTE systems will work together to continue to lead the way in training America's workforce.

To learn more about Registered Apprenticeship, or to get contact information for your state apprenticeship office, log on to [www.doleta.gov/OA/](http://www.doleta.gov/OA/). If you would like to get more involved, consider joining the Registered Apprenticeship Community of Practice to learn about, and contribute to, the efforts taking place across the nation to link education, workforce training and Registered Apprenticeship. Join today at <http://21stcenturyapprenticeship.workforce3one.org/>. ■

#### Jane Oates

Is the assistant secretary for the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration.

#### John V. Ladd

Is the administrator for the Employment and Training Administration's National Office of Apprenticeship. Ladd can be contacted at [ladd.john@dol.gov](mailto:ladd.john@dol.gov).



Interested in exploring this topic further? Discuss it with your colleagues on the ACTE forums at [www.acteonline.org/forum.aspx](http://www.acteonline.org/forum.aspx).